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THE BOOK OF THE BEASTS

THE BOOK OF THE BEASTS

TRANSLATED FROM THE CATALAN OF RAMÓN LULL

BY

E. ALLISON PEERS

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To
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PREFACE

Of the life and works of Ramón Lull I have already written at some length in the introductions to my translation of the small medieval classic *The Book of the Lover and the Beloved* (London, 1923), and of his great romance *Blanquerna* (London, 1926). This little book may therefore be left to make its own appeal and tell its own story.

Belonging to the well-known Reynard the Fox cycle, *The Book of the Beasts* is as individual a work as many a one that enjoys less numerous relatives. A few of the tales interwoven with it have indeed well-known sources, but more of them by far are either entirely original or freely adapted from the Arabic, a language which Lull knew well. His, too, is much of the characterisation,—the guileful and sanctimonious Reynard, it will be noticed, is not a "he" but a "she,"—and his very emphatically are the sidelights thrown upon the political and social abuses of the Aragon and Mallorca of his day. As men relate fables about

animals, just so in this story, the "little people of the lion," with perfect verisimilitude, are made to relate fables about men.

The Book of the Beasts forms one section, complete in itself, of *Felix*, a companion romance to *Blanquerna*, and one which I hope at some time to translate in full. It was written about the year 1286. The present translation—the first, like its fellows, to be made from Lull into the English language—is as literal as a translation can well be, and thus gives a fairly accurate idea of its author's Catalan vocabulary and of his style.

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THE UNIVERSITY,
LIVERPOOL.

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BEGINNETH THE BOOK OF THE BEASTS

CHAPTER I

OF THE ELECTION OF THE KING

In a fair plain, watered by a cooling stream, there was a great company of wild beasts who desired to elect a king. Agreement was made by the greater part of them that the lion should be king, but the ox disputed the election very vehemently, and spake these words: "Sirs! the nobility of the office of king requires beauty of person and greatness and humility, nor is it fitting that there be elected a king who works harm to his subjects. Now the lion is not truly great, nor is he a beast that lives on grass, but he devours other beasts. And the lion has a voice so terrible that when he cries aloud he makes us all to tremble with fear. My counsel therefore is that ye elect as your king the horse; for the horse is truly great, and fair to look upon, and humble; moreover, he is fleet of foot, and has no proud looks, and eats no flesh."

Very pleasing was this counsel to the ſtag, the roedeer, and the sheep, and to all the other beaſts that lived upon grass. But Dame Reynard came forward to speak before them all, and said these words:

"Sirs! When God created the world, He created it not with the intention that man should be known and loved, but rather that He Himself should be known and loved by man. According to the which intention God willed that man should be served by the beaſts, and man lives on flesh and on plants alike. Wherefore, sirs, ye ought not to have regard to the intention of the ox, who hates the lion because he eats flesh; but rather should ye follow the rule and ordinance which God has given and enjoined upon the creatures."

On the other hand, the ox, and his companions with him, spake ſtrongly againſt the words of Dame Reynard, and the ox said as follows: "If I and my companions have said that the horse, who eats grass, should be king, it is clear that we have true intention as to the election of the king, for if we had false intention we should not desire the election of the horse, who eats grass even as do we ourselves. Nor should ye have regard to Dame Reynard concerning

this thing, for she desires and wishes that the lion be elected, not in any wise for his nobility, but rather because she lives by the scraps which he leaves when he has sated himself with the beasts whom he has made his prey."

So many words were spoken on the one part and on the other, that the whole court was in an uproar, and the election was delayed. Then the bear and the leopard and the ounce, who had hopes that they themselves might be elected, said that the court should be adjourned until some other time, when they might determine which beast was the fittest to be king. Dame Reynard knew that the bear, the leopard and the ounce were deferring the election because each of them had the hope of being king, so she spake, in the presence of all, these words:[1]

"In a certain cathedral church there was made an election, and there was a dispute in the chapter concerning the choice of a bishop; for there were some among the canons who desired that the sacrist of that church should be bishop, since he was a man very learned and full of virtues. But the archdeacon desired also to be elected bishop,

[1] For this story, compare *Blanquerna*, London, 1926, pp. 267-9.

and the master of the schools likewise; so they disputed the election of the sacrist, and were consenting to the election of a simple canon, who was right fair to look upon, but had no learning soever. That canon was small in person and was greatly given to vice. So the chapter marvelled greatly at that which the archdeacon and the master of the schools put forward, and a certain canon rose and spake these words: 'If the lion is king, and the bear, the ounce and the leopard have disputed his election, they will be for ever enemies of the king; and if the horse is king, and the lion commits any fault against him, how will the horse take vengeance for it, since he is not so strong as the lion?'"

When the bear, the ounce and the leopard had heard the example which Dame Reynard spake to them, they had great fear of the lion, and gave consent to his election, and desired that he should be king. So by reason of the strength of the bear, and of the other beasts that eat flesh, the lion was elected king against the will of those that eat grass.

Then the lion gave leave to all the beasts that eat flesh, that they should eat and live upon the beasts that eat grass. It came to pass one day that the king was seated in

parliament, disposing the ordinances of his court. All that day, until the first hour of night, were the king and his barons in parliament, and had neither eaten nor drunk; and when they had ended parliament, the lion and his companions were hungered, and enquired of the wolf, and of Dame Reynard likewise, what there might be to eat. These answered him, saying that it was late to hunt for meat, but that not far from that place there was a calf, the son of the ox, and a foal, the son of the horse, whereof they might eat abundantly. So the lion sent to that place, and commanded the calf and the foal to be brought, and they all ate them together. Greatly wroth was the ox at the death of his son, and even so was the horse; so they went together to Man, to place themselves at his service, that he in return might avenge them of the wrong which their lord had committed against them.

When the ox and the horse had presented themselves to Man that they might serve him, he rode forthwith upon the horse, and made the ox to plough his land. It came to pass one day that the horse and the ox met, and each asked the other concerning his estate. The horse said that he laboured

greatly in the service of his lord, for he rode upon him every day, and he made him to gallop up hill and down hill, and both by day and by night he had him ever saddled. Great was the desire of the horse to leave the service of his master, and he would fain have returned to be a subject of the lion; but since the lion ate flesh, and since he himself had had some desire to be elected king, he feared to return to the domains of the lion, and had rather remain in servitude under the rule of Man, who ate no horse's flesh, than be under the dominion of the lion, who ate horse's flesh.

When the horse had recounted his story to the ox, the ox made reply that he was greatly fatigued likewise with ploughing, and that his lord permitted him not to eat of the corn which was yielded by the ground that he ploughed, but that when at length he was permitted to leave the plough he was sent out to pasture upon the grass whereon the sheep and the goats had grazed while he was ploughing. Very vehemently did the ox make complaint of his lord, and the horse consoled him so far as he could.

Now while the ox and the horse held converse, there came a butcher to examine the ox and to see if he was fat, for the master

of the ox desired to sell him. So the ox told the horse that his lord was about to sell him, after which he would be killed and eaten by men. "A poor return is this," said the horse, "for the service which thou hast given to thy master." So for a long time they wept together, and the horse counselled the ox to take flight and to return to his own country; for better was he advantaged to be in peril of death among his own people, where he was at rest, than with a master who caused him to work so hard and yet was so ungrateful for his service.

CHAPTER II

OF THE COUNCIL OF THE KING

When the lion was elected king, he made a fair speech before all his people, and spake these words: "It is your will, sirs, that I should be your king. Ye know all that the office of king is one of great peril, and is very grievous. Of great peril it is, since for the sins of a king it comes to pass many a time that God sends hunger and sickness and war and pestilence to a country, and this He does likewise for the sins of a people. Wherefore it is a thing most perilous for a king to reign, and his reign is likewise perilous to all his people. And as it is a great labour for the king to govern both himself and his people, therefore I pray you all to give me councillors who may aid and counsel me in such wise that both I and my people may be saved. And these councillors whom ye shall give me, I beg you that they may be wise and loyal subjects, worthy of their high office, and of their presence beside a king."

Greatly were the barons and all the people

pleased at these words which the king had spoken, and each and all thought themselves in good fortune at the election of the king. So agreement was made that the bear and the leopard and the ounce and the serpent and the wolf should be councillors of the king. All these in presence of the court sware to give loyal counsel in all things that they might, but Dame Reynard was greatly displeased thereat, since she had not been elected as a councillor of the king, and in the presence of the court she spake these words:

"According as it is written in the Gospel, Jesus Christ, who is the King of Heaven and earth, desired to have in this world the friendship and company of men that were simple and humble; wherefore He chose the Apostles, who were men both simple and poor, in significance that through their virtue He should exalt them, and that they should be of humble estate no longer. Wherefore, saving the opinion of you all, I say that to my mind the king should have in his council beasts that are simple and humble, that they should have pride neither of power nor of lineage, and should not desire to make themselves equal with the king. And I say that thus to the beasts that are simple

and that live upon grass there should be given an example of hope and humility."

To the elephant, the boar, the goat and the lamb, and to other beasts that live upon grass, that which was spoken by Dame Reynard seemed very good; and all these gave counsel to the king that Dame Reynard should be of the council likewise, since she spake fairly with her tongue and had great wisdom. Dame Reynard, on the other hand, gave her counsel and said that it seemed good that the elephant, the boar, the goat and the lamb should be of the council of the king.

Great talk had the bear, the leopard and the ounce among themselves, when they heard that Dame Reynard was of the council of the king; for they had great fear that she, with her cunning speech and her skill, would bring them into his wrath, and this all the more because she had counselled his election more vehemently than had any other beast.

"Sire," said the leopard to the king, "in thy court there is a cock who is fair to look upon, and he is wise, and he is also lord over many hens. Right clearly and fairly does this cock sing at dawn, wherefore it is very much more fitting that he should be of thy council than Dame Reynard." The elephant

said likewise that it was good that the cock should be in the council of the king, that he might give him example how to rule his queen, and make her submissive to him, and likewise that he might learn to rise at dawn and make prayer to God. And the elephant said also that Dame Reynard was well able to counsel the king, since she was a beast of great wisdom and had knowledge of many things. But the leopard said that it was not fitting that two persons who by nature have such antipathy the one to the other should be together in the council, for, by reason of the evil will which they have the one to the other, the council of the king might be disturbed. On the other side spake Dame Reynard, and said that the council should be composed of beasts that were handsome and well grown, such as the elephant, the boar, the goat, the lamb and the stag, since a fine presence is fitting in those that are about the king.

The king desired that Dame Reynard and her companions should all be of his court and of his council, and this was done, but the leopard spake secretly to the king in these words:

"Sire, there was a count who went to war with a king; and, as the count was less

powerful than the king, he aided himself with great skill in his warfare, after this manner, that he gave great gifts to the scrivener of the king, to the end that he might make known to him all the skill and the ſtrategy which the king worked in his war againſt the count. By which means that scrivener impeded the power of the king, who could not bring to a ſucceſsful end his war againſt the count."

When the leopard had ended these words, and the lion had underſtood the meaning thereof, he gave order that the cock ſhould be of his court, and deſired no longer that Dame Reynard ſhould be therein, leſt ſhe ſhould diſcloſe to the elephant and the other beaſts which live upon grass the cuſtoms of the king and of his companions who live upon flesh.

CHAPTER III

OF THE TREASON WHICH DAME REYNARD WORKED AGAINST THE KING

GREATLY displeased were Dame Reynard and her companions that they were not of the council of the king; whereupon Dame Reynard conceived treason in her mind and desired that the king should die. So she spake to the elephant these words: "Henceforward there will be great enmity between the beasts who live upon flesh and those that live upon grass; for the king and his councillors eat flesh, and ye have no beast in his council who is of your nature, nor any who will maintain your right."

The elephant answered and said that he had hope that the serpent and the cock might uphold his right at the court of the king, since they were beasts who lived not upon flesh. Dame Reynard made answer and said: "In a certain country it came to pass that a Christian had a Saracen slave in whom he greatly trusted, and to whom he gave many favours; but the Saracen, because he was opposed to him by reason of their

respective laws, had no good will towards him, and considered daily how he might slay him.[1] Even so, Sir Elephant," said Dame Reynard, "are the serpent and the cock of other lineage than thou and thy companions; for, although they eat not flesh, they trust thee not by any means, but rather ye may be certified that they will consent to anything that will bring harm to thee and to thy companions."

In great thought was the elephant by reason of the words which Dame Reynard had spoken to him, and he considered for a long time the harm which might come to him and his companions through the choice which they had made of a king and through his councillors. While the elephant considered thus, Dame Reynard said to him that he need have no fear of the king or of his companions, for if he himself desired to be king, she would bring it to pass that he should become so. The elephant had great suspicion that Dame Reynard might betray him, since by her nature she loved of necessity the beasts who live upon flesh rather than those that live upon grass. Wherefore he spake to Dame Reynard in these words:

[1] This had happened to Lull himself when he first began to study Arabic.

"In a certain land it came to pass that a kite was holding in his claws a rat, and a hermit prayed to God that the rat might fall into his robe. Through the prayers of this holy man God caused the rat to fall into the robe of that hermit, who thereupon prayed that God would turn it into a fair damsel. This prayer likewise God granted, and he made the rat to become a damsel. 'Fair child,' said the hermit, 'wilt thou have the sun for a husband?' 'Nay, sir,' she answered, 'for the clouds rob the sun of all his brightness.' Then the hermit asked her if she desired the moon for a husband, and she answered that the moon had not its brightness of itself, but rather of the sun. 'Fair child,' said the hermit, 'wilt thou have a cloud for a husband?' 'Nay, sir,' she answered, 'for the wind chases the cloud whithersoever it will.' Neither desired she the wind for a husband, since the mountains impede its motion; nor did she desire the mountains, since men make tunnels therein; nor did she desire a man for a husband, for men slay rats. So in the end the damsel begged the hermit to pray God to turn her into a rat, even as she was aforetime, and to give her a fair rat as a husband."

When Dame Reynard had heard this

example,[1] she knew that the elephant had suspicion of her, and feared that he should find her out; and she would fain have said to the boar that he should be king, even as she had said to the elephant, but she dared not. So to the end that it might not be known what was in her mind, she resolved to bring it to pass at all costs that the elephant should be king, and she spake to him these words:

"It came to pass in a certain land that a knight had of his lady a fair son. It came to pass likewise that the lady of that knight died, and the knight took another wife, who conceived a great dislike for the boy, whom her husband loved greatly. When the boy had come to the age of twenty years, that lady took thought as to how she might cause her husband to drive his son from the house, so she said that the boy had sinned greatly in demanding her for his pleasure. So dearly did the knight love his wife that he believed incontinently all that she had said to him, and he drave his son from his house, and commanded him nevermore to appear in his presence. Very greatly was the youth moved to wrath against his father, because he had driven him from his house

[1] An example is a brief fable-like story with a moral.

without reason, and withdrawn his favour from him."

By this example which Dame Reynard related, the mind of the elephant was in part set at rest, and he believed in that which Dame Reynard had told him, how he should be king. So he said to Dame Reynard: "How shall we bring it to pass that the king may die, and that I may be elected king, since the king is so strong in his person, and has furthermore so many wise counsellors, and since thou art so small a beast, and hast so little power?" Then Dame Reynard answered with this example:

"It came to pass in a certain country that all the beasts made agreement to sacrifice an animal from among themselves day by day to the lion, that he might leave them undisturbed when he went hunting; and the lion accepted their indemnity. So every day these beasts drew lots, and daily that one on whom the lot fell went to the lion and was eaten by him.

"Now one day the lot chanced to fall upon a hare, and the hare deferred going to the lion until the hour of midday, because she feared to die. Greatly wroth was the lion, for he had great hunger, and the hare had tarried long, so he enquired of her why

she had tarried so long in coming to him. Then the hare made excuse, and said that near that place there was another lion, who said that he was king of that country, and that he had nearly captured her. Great was the wrath of the lion, for he thought that the hare had spoken truly, and he commanded her to show him that lion. So the hare led him forward, and the lion followed her, until they came to a great piece of water, the which was part of a lake, surrounded on all sides by a great wall. When the hare reached the water, and her shadow and the shadow of the lion appeared therein, then said the hare to the lion: 'Here, Sire, thou seest the lion who is in the water and would fain eat a hare.' The lion looked upon his shadow and thought that it was another lion, so he leapt into the water to do battle with that lion. Then he was drowned, and died in the water, and the hare knew that it was she who had put the lion to death."

When the elephant had heard this example, he answered Dame Reynard with another like to it:

"A certain king had two pages who attended to his person. It came to pass one day that the king was seated on his throne, and before him was a great company of

noble barons and knights. Now one of these pages was before him also, and he saw that upon the cloak of white samite wherein the king was clothed there was a flea. That page enquired of the king if he might be permitted to draw near to him and take away the flea which was upon his cloak, so the king gave him leave to approach, and the page took it. Then the king desired to see it, and he showed it to all his knights, saying that it was a great marvel how that so small a beast should dare to draw near to a king. And the king commanded that there should be given to the page one hundred bezants. Then the other page had great envy of his companion, and on the next day he placed on the mantle of the king a great louse, and he spake to the king words like to those which his companion had spoken. But when the page showed the beast to the king, the king drew back in horror, and said that he deserved to die, because he kept not his vestments free from vermin. So he commanded that there should be given to that page one hundred lashes."

Dame Reynard now knew that the elephant feared to be king, and she marvelled how one with so great a presence could be capable of so much fear. So she spake to the elephant

in these words: " It is said that the serpent, with the aid of Mother Eve, who was one woman only, brought Adam and all his race into the wrath of God. Wherefore if the serpent and Eve could work so great harm, it may certainly come to pass that I, with my skill and wisdom, shall be able to bring the king into the wrath of his people."

In that same hour, when Dame Reynard had related the example of Mother Eve, the elephant consented to the treason concerning the king, and he said to Dame Reynard that he would willingly become king, provided that she could bring about the death of King Lion. Dame Reynard assured him that she would bring this to pass, whereupon he promised her great gifts and great honours if she would cause him to become king in the stead of the lion.

CHAPTER IV

OF THE MANNER WHEREIN DAME REYNARD BECAME PORTER OF THE KING

In the court of the king was ordinance made that the cat should be the royal chamberlain, and the dog, porter. The cat was made chamberlain that he might eat the rats which destroyed the garments that were in the palace, and, moreover, because he was like to the king in countenance. The dog was made porter because he could perceive things from afar off, and could bark and give warning to the king concerning all who came to his court.

While the cat and the dog were occupied in performing the duties of their office, Dame Reynard went to seek the ox and the horse, who had left the royal court, and she found the ox upon the road which led him back to the court. Dame Reynard and the ox met in a fair plain. Each saluted the other very pleasantly, and the ox recounted to Dame Reynard his story: to wit, how he had come to Man a free being, and how Man had held him for a long while in servitude,

and, in the end, had desired to sell him to a butcher that he might be slain.

Dame Reynard on her side related to the ox all the things that had come to pass in the royal court, according as has been recounted above.

"Sir Ox," said Dame Reynard, "what is thy will in this thing?"

"I come," he answered, "that I may return to the royal court, and flee from Man, who has desired to sell me and to have me slain."

Then Dame Reynard spake to the ox in these words: "In a certain kingdom it came to pass that the king was a man of very evil customs and his council likewise was very evil. So all that kingdom, through the malice of the king and of his council, fell into the wrath and indignation of God, for the evil was inestimable which the king and his council did to the people who were in that kingdom. For so long time did it last that the people could suffer it no longer, and through the evil life and example of the king and of his council, they came to desire that both king and councillors should die."

The ox took knowledge from that which Dame Reynard had said that the king of beasts and his council were both evil, and

he feared to return, lest he should be subjected to a government that was so evil. So he spake to Dame Reynard in these words:

"There was a bishop in a certain city whose actions were contrary to his office, and from the evil customs and the dishonesty of the bishop, and from the evil example that he gave to his chapter and to the people of that city, there resulted great harm, and much good was lost which would have been done had the bishop lived as he ought to have lived, according to the rule and doctrine which Jesus Christ gave to His Apostles and His followers. It came to pass one day that the bishop had done a great wrong, and went straightway to sing Mass. But a certain clerk held the evil thing which the bishop had done in so great abomination that he left the city, and went to live with the shepherds in the woods and fields; and he said that it was better to live with shepherds who keep their sheep from the wolves than with a shepherd that slays his sheep and gives them to the wolves."

When the ox had related this example, he said to Dame Reynard that he would depart from that country, for he had no confidence in the king or in his council, since his rule was so evil.

"Sir Ox," said Dame Reynard, "hast thou heard of the request which was made by a certain hermit to a king?"

"Nay," answered the ox. "What was that?"

So Dame Reynard answered, saying that in a high mountain there once lived a holy hermit. That hermit was a man of very devout life, and daily he heard many complaints concerning the king of that country, that he was a sinful man and wont to govern ill; and the people ceased not to speak evil of the king to this holy man. So the hermit was greatly displeased at the evil estate of the king, and had great devotion to lead him into an estate that was better. So the holy man came down from his hermitage, and went to a fair city wherein was the king. "Sire," said the holy man to the king, "which thing thinkest thou to be more pleasing to God in this world, whether the life of a hermit, or the life of a king whose customs and whose government of his people are good?" For a great space of time the king pondered this question before he gave answer; and in the end he said that the life of a king whose works are good is an occasion of greater good than the life of a hermit. "Sire," answered the hermit, "greatly am

I pleased with thine answer, whereby it is signified that a king who is evil works more harm in his kingdom than the good which any hermit soever can work in his hermitage. Wherefore have I come to thee, and have left my hermitage, purposing to be with thee for a long time, even until thou and thy kingdom shall be in good estate, speaking to thee the words of God whereby thou mayest have love of God and knowledge and fear of Him." So that hermit remained for a great while in the court of the king, speaking good words concerning God, whereby the king was led into a good estate, and all his kingdom was well and prosperously governed.

When Dame Reynard had related this example, she spake to the ox in these words: "Sir Ox, thou art a beast like unto the hermit, and if thou desirest I will give thee counsel whereby thou mayest bring the king, who is my lord even as thine, into good estate, and from that which thou doest there will result much good."

The ox made promise to Dame Reynard that he would do all such good things as he might, to the end that the king and his people should have profit thereby. Then Dame Reynard counselled the ox that he

should go to a fair meadow, near to the place wherein were the king and his barons, and that he should ſtay there and graze freely, that he might be good to look upon and that his voice might be of great power.

"When thou art once again well and ſtrong, Sir Ox," continued Dame Reynard, "then ſhalt thou bellow as mightily as thou canſt, thrice daily, and thrice each night, during the which time I will speak with the king concerning thee."

The ox followed this counsel, and Dame Reynard returned to the court of the king. When the ox had grazed freely and was very ſtrong, he lifted up his voice and bellowed with great might. Now when Dame Reynard heard the bellowing of the ox, she went before the king and remained in his presence while the ox bellowed. So great was the fear of the king when he heard the bellowing of the ox, that he could not keep himself from trembling, and he had shame concerning his barons leſt they should hold him for a coward. While the lion remained thus in so great fear, and none of his barons as yet perceived the fear of the king, Dame Reynard drew near to him, whereupon the cock crew, and the dog barked, because they saw Dame Reynard approaching the king.

But it pleased the king that Dame Reynard should approach him, and he asked her whose was that voice that he had heard, for it seemed to him the voice of a beaſt that was great and ſtrong.

"Sire," answered Dame Reynard, "in a certain valley a jeſter[1] had hung his drum upon a tree, and the wind blew upon the drum and caused it to ſtrike the branches of the tree. By reason of the ſtriking of the drum upon the tree there went forth from it a great voice, the which voice caused that valley to echo. Now there was a monkey in that valley who heard the sound and went to look upon the drum; and he thought that because the voice was loud the drum was full of butter, or some other thing that was good to eat. So the monkey brake the drum and found that it was empty. Wherefore, Sire," said Dame Reynard to the lion, "thou mayeſt be sure that the voice which thou heareſt is the voice of a beaſt that is as empty of valour[2] as was the drum, and has not the ſtrength which is signified by his voice. Be ye therefore ſtrong and of good courage, for it befits not that a king be

[1] The word translated jeſter throughout this ſtory is *juglar;* see *Blanquerna*, p. 175, *n.* 2.

[2] *I.e.*, true worth; see *Blanquerna*, p. 175, *n.* 1.

fearful, nor that he tremble at aught the nature whereof he knows not."

While Dame Reynard was speaking thus to the king, the ox lifted up his voice and bellowed again very loudly, in such wise that all that place re-echoed wherein the lion was, and the lion and his companions trembled one and all. Then the king could no longer refrain from giving sign of his fear, and he said that if the ſtrength of that beaſt were according to his voice, there would befall some evil thing in that place.

Again the ox bellowed, and the lion and all his council had great fear; but Dame Reynard gave no sign of fear in herself, but was full of good courage before the king and his council. Great marvel had the king concerning Dame Reynard, because she had no fear, and great marvel had all the reſt. Then the king spake to Dame Reynard in these words:

"Reynard," said the king, "how is it that thou haſt no fear of this voice which is so powerful and so exceeding ſtrange? Thou seeſt that I, who am so ſtrong, and the bear and the leopard and many beaſts beside, who are all ſtronger than art thou, do fear this voice exceedingly."

Dame Reynard answered the king in these words:

"A crow made its nest in a rock, and year by year a great serpent devoured its young. The crow had great wrath by reason of the serpent who devoured its young, but it dared not do battle with the serpent, because it had not the strength to vanquish it by force of arms. So the crow bethought itself how it might oppose the serpent by strategy, since force sufficient to fight it had not. It came to pass one day that the daughter of a king was playing with her damsels in an orchard, and she had placed her garland, which was of silver and gold and precious stones, upon the branch of a tree. So the crow took that garland and flew about with it for a long time until many men followed it, to see where it would place the garland that the daughter of the king loved so greatly, and the loss whereof caused her to weep very bitterly. The crow set the garland in that place wherein the serpent was, and the men, when they came to seize the garland which was there, saw the serpent and slew it; by the which means the crow made use of others in her battle with the serpent, through subtlety and art. Even so, Sire," said Dame Reynard to the

lion, "have I great art and subtlety, by the which means, if it came to pass that I could not by force of arms vanquish the beast which has so great a voice, I could yet cause him to come to a shameful death."

When Dame Reynard had related this example, the serpent, who was one of the councillors of the king, spake after this manner:

"In a certain lake there was a goose, which for a long time had been accustomed to catch fish very often. That goose grew old, and by reason of his age it came to pass many times that the fish which he would have caught escaped him. So the goose considered by what means he might use art and subtlety whereby he might catch his prey. The which art became to him the occasion of his death."

The lion answered the serpent, and commanded him to relate the manner wherein the goose met his death.

"My lord the king," said the serpent, "that goose remained a whole day without looking for fish, even until nightfall, and he remained on the bank of the lake very sorrowfully. Now there was a crab near by, who marvelled greatly because the goose no longer sought for fish according to his wont,

and he enquired of him wherefore he went so sorrowfully. And the goose made complaint, and said that he had great compassion on the fish which were in that lake, and whereon he had lived for so long a time, and he greatly bewailed their death and the harm which had come to them; and two fishermen, who had been fishing in a certain lake, purposed now to come to this lake, for in the other they desired to fish no longer. And these fishermen, he said, were cunning masters of their art, and no fish could escape them, and they would take all the fish that were in that lake.

"When the crab had heard these words, he conceived great fear, and he related the thing to the other fish his companions. So they all assembled together and went to the goose and begged him to give them counsel. 'There is no counsel to give,' the goose made answer, 'save one thing, namely, that I should take you all, one by one, to another lake, which is a league from this place. In that lake there are many reeds and rushes, and there is much mud in the bed thereof, so that the fishermen will not catch you or do you any harm.' All the fish held this counsel to be very good, and day by day the goose took as many of them as he desired,

and made as though he would carry them to the other lake; but, when he had reached a hillock that was near at hand, he ate the fish which he was carrying and then returned for another.

"This thing the goose did for a very long time, in such manner that he lived well without the labour of fishing. But it came to pass one day that the crab begged the goose that he would take him on that day to the other lake. The goose put forward his neck and the crab seized the neck of the goose with both hands. While the goose went in this manner with the crab upon his neck, the crab marvelled greatly because he saw not the lake to the which the goose was bearing him. And when the goose was near to that place where he was wont to devour the fish, the crab saw the bones of the fish which the goose had already eaten, and he knew the trick which the goose was playing upon him. So he said to himself: 'While thou hast time thou must needs avenge thyself upon that traitor who purposed to devour thee.' So the crab seized the neck of the goose so vehemently that it brake, and the goose fell to the ground dead, and the crab returned to his companions, to whom he related the treason of the goose

which had been to him the occasion of his death."

"Sire," said Dame Reynard, "at that time when God cast Adam out of Paradise, He cursed the serpent, who had counselled Eve to eat of the fruit which God had forbidden to Adam; from the which time forward all serpents have been horrible to behold, and likewise full of poison. And all the evils which are in the world have come through the serpent; wherefore a certain wise man caused a serpent to be cast out of the council of a king, though the king loved that serpent very dearly."

Then the lion begged Dame Reynard that she would relate to him that example.

"Sire," said Dame Reynard, "that king had heard of a holy man whose wisdom was very great, and he sent to seek him. When the holy man came to the king, he begged him that he would remain with him, and give him counsel how he might govern his kingdom, and reprove him for the vice which he had, if it were so that he found any in him. So the holy man remained with the king, to the end that he might counsel him to do good works, and to eschew evil."

Now one day it happened that the king held a council upon a certain thing which

had come to pass in this kingdom. Near the king there was a great serpent, whose counsel the king welcomed more than that of any other. When that holy man saw the serpent, he asked the king what thing is signified by kingship in this world; and the king answered that kingship was established in this world in significance of the power of God, that is to say, that a king keeps justice in this world, and governs the people whom God has committed to him. 'Sire,' answered the wise man, 'what beast was most contrary to the will of God after He had created the world?' The king answered that it was the serpent. 'My lord the king,' said the wise man, 'according to the answer which thou hast given, it is signified that thou shouldst kill the serpent. Great harm doest thou in keeping him in thy court, for if thou dost represent the image of God, inasmuch as thou art king, then shouldst thou shun all that which is shunned by God, and most of all that which is shunned by God more than aught beside.' So by reason of that which the holy man had spoken, the king slew the serpent, without allowing him to use subtlety or art to save his life."

When Dame Reynard had related this example, the ox cried and bellowed so

vehemently that he made all that place to tremble, and the lion and all the reſt had great fear. So Dame Reynard said to the king that, if he desired, she would go out to that beaſt whose voice was so powerful and so ſtrange, and would see if he could be brought before the king and be among his companions. It pleased the lion and all the reſt that Dame Reynard should go out to speak with that beaſt that was bellowing. Then Dame Reynard begged of the king that, if it came to pass that the beaſt should consent to enter his court, he should be safe and free from harm, and that none should do wrong to his person nor commit any villainy upon him. And the lion, before all his council, granted Dame Reynard that which she had asked of him.

So Dame Reynard went out to that meadow wherein the ox was sojourning, and the ox, when he saw her, had great pleasure thereat. When they had saluted each other right fairly, Dame Reynard related to the ox all that had come to pass since she had left him.

"Fair friend," said Dame Reynard, "go thou before the king, and remain before him with humble countenance, and give semblance in thy geſtures of great prudence, and I will

say that thou hast conceived great contrition, because thou hast been for so long time far from the dominion of the king. Then, in the presence of all, ask thou pardon of the king for having left him to be with Man, and for having forsaken the dominion of the king for that of another. In this manner," said Dame Reynard, "speak thou and remain before the king and his court, that he and all his council may be pleased by thy words and gestures. Recount thou likewise to the king that which thou hast learned concerning the estate of Man, and counsel the king to make friendship with the king of men."

Then the ox and Dame Reynard came to the court of the king; and when the king and his barons saw them coming they one and all recognised the ox, and they had exceeding great shame at the fear wherewith he had inspired them. And the king marvelled that the ox was so great and had so terrible and powerful a voice.

The ox made before his lord the king reverence as is fitting to a king, and the king enquired concerning his estate, whereupon the ox recounted to him all that had come to pass since he had entered the service of Man. Then the king made answer that he marvelled how that the ox had changed his voice, and

the ox said that it was with fear and contrition that he had cried aloud, for he supposed that he was in evil favour with the king and his court, because he had left him for so long a time and had submitted to the dominion of another. And since contrition and terror had made his mind to fear, therefore had his voice changed, in significance of fear and terror and affright, because it proceeded from a body wherein was a terrified and penitent mind.

So the ox begged forgiveness of the king, and the king granted it to him in the presence of all his court. After this he enquired of him concerning the estate of the king of men, and the ox said to him that a certain serpent had truly said that the most false and evil beast in this world is Man.

The lion asked the ox to tell him the reason for this judgement of the serpent.

" Sire," answered the ox, " it came to pass one day that a bear, and a crow, and a man, and a serpent had fallen into a well. There passed by that place wherein was the well a holy man who was a hermit, the which man looked into the well, and saw all four beasts therein, none of whom could escape. With one accord they begged this holy man to draw them out of the well, and promised

him a good recompense for the service. So that man drew the bear and the crow and the serpent out of the well, and when he was about to draw the man out likewise the serpent advised him not to do so, for, if he did, he would receive an ill guerdon. The hermit believed not the counsel which was given him by the serpent, and he drew the man out of the well.

"Soon afterwards the bear brought to the hermit a hive of bees, which was full of honey, and when the hermit had eaten of the honey, and taken his fill thereof, he journeyed to a city where he desired to preach. As he entered the city, the crow approached him with a garland, which was very precious, and which belonged to the daughter of the king, from whose head he had taken it. The hermit took the garland, and had great joy thereat, for it was very precious. Now there went a man through the city crying out that if any man had that garland, and returned it to the daughter of the king, he would receive from her a great reward; and that if any had taken the garland, and gave it not up, but hid it, he would receive an exceeding great punishment. The good hermit came to a road where he saw that man whom he had drawn up from

the well, the which man was a silversmith. The holy man gave the garland to the silversmith secretly, and the silversmith took it to the court and accused the holy man. So that holy man was taken, and beaten, and imprisoned.

"Then the serpent whom the hermit had saved from the well came to the daughter of the king, who was asleep, and bit her upon the hand, and the daughter of the king cried aloud and wept, for her hand was swollen very greatly. The king was exceeding wroth at the sickness of his daughter, because her hand was swollen and inflamed, and he caused it to be proclaimed through all the city that he would give great gifts to the man who could heal his daughter. Then the serpent went to the king as he slept, and whispered in his ear that in the prison of his court was a captive who had a herb wherewith he could heal the daughter of the king. That herb the serpent had given to the holy man, and had instructed him to place it upon the hand of the princess, and to beg the king at the same time to bring the silversmith to judgement, since he had given him so evil a guerdon. As the serpent commanded, even so it was done, and the hermit was delivered from prison, and the

silversmith was sentenced to great punishment."

Very pleasing to the lion and to all his council was the example which the ox had related against the Man, and he enquired of the ox if it seemed well to him that he should have fear of the king of men. The ox answered the lion and said that it is a thing most perilous to be at enmity with the king of men, for no beast can defend himself from a man that is evil and powerful and subtle.

The lion considered deeply that which the ox had said to him, and Dame Reynard knew that the lion had fear of the king of men, and she spake to the king in these words:

"Sire, the proudest beast of all, and the beast wherein is more avarice than in any other, is Man; wherefore, if it seemed good to thee and to thy council, thou mightest well send messengers and gifts to the king of men, and relate to him by these messengers the goodwill which thou hast to him, in significance whereof thou sendest him presents. Then will the king of men conceive love in his heart for thee and for thy people."

The king and his council held that which Dame Reynard had said to be very good, but the cock disputed it, in these words:

"In a certain country Strength and Skill disputed together in the presence of a king. Strength said that by nature she had dominion over Skill, and Skill alleged the contrary. The king desired to know which of these two should have dominion the one over the other, so he caused them to fight, and Skill subdued and conquered Strength. Wherefore, my lord the king," said the cock, "if thou makeſt friendship with the king of men, and sendeſt him messengers, and he sends messengers to thee likewise, these messengers that are sent by him will have knowledge of thy person and of thy barons, so that neither by stratagem nor art wilt thou be able to defend thyself from the king of men, who does battle with art and ſtratagem, vanquishing all such as fight by ſtrength alone without art or ſtratagem soever."

On the other side spake Dame Reynard, and said that without art or ſtratagem God makes all things soever that He creates; wherefore, she said, it is fitting that, according to nature, those warriors should be moſt powerful in battle who fight with arms moſt like to those of God, rather than such as do battle with arms unlike the arms of God.

Greatly was the lion pleased with that

which Dame Reynard had said, and he desired at all hazards to send gifts and messengers to the king of men. So the king enquired of her what messengers she would counsel him to send to the king of men, and what gifts he should send him; and Dame Reynard answered the king that the ox should counsel him by right, since he was learned in the customs of men, and knew what things attracted men most. So the king asked the ox to counsel him concerning the messengers and the presents which he should send to the king of men; whereupon the ox spake to him in these words:

"My lord the king, it is the nature of the kings of men that when they send messengers they send them from their council, and from the noblest of those that are in their council. According to my opinion, the noblest councillors whom thou hast in thy council are the ounce and the leopard. But it is also to be borne in mind that the cat hath semblance to thy person, and the king of men will be greatly pleased thereat, if thou sendest him the cat and the dog as presents: the cat because he hath semblance of thyself, and the dog because he is useful in the chase, and all men set great store by hunting."

Even as the ox gave counsel, even so did the lion, and he sent the ounce and the leopard to the king, and the cat and the dog as presents. And when the messengers had left the court, the king made the ox his chamberlain, and the office which the dog had held aforetime was given to Dame Reynard.

CHAPTER V

OF THE MESSENGERS THAT THE LION SENT TO THE KING OF MEN

You must know that before the messengers left the court, the lion gave instruction to the leopard and the ounce, how they should carry out their mission, and he spake to them saying: "In messengers that are wise is made significance of the wisdom of their lord, the more so if they are fairly spoken, prudent in counsel, and given to conciliation; and significance is made likewise of the nobility of the lord when his messengers carry out their mission in due order, and are decently clothed, and have company with them that are well appointed and well fed, and not given to avarice, neither to lust, pride, wrath, or any other vice. All these things and many more are needful in the messengers of a noble prince, to the end that their mission may be pleasing to that prince to whom they are sent and to his court."

When the lion had thus instructed his messengers as to the speech which they should hold with the king, and as to their conduct

in his court, the messengers left the court and went and journeyed through many and divers lands. On they journeyed until they reached a city wherein the king was holding parliament. At the entrance to that city they met certain women from a house of ill fame, and in presence of the messengers they sinned greatly with certain men. Great was the marvel of the messengers when they saw this thing, and the leopard spake to his companion in these words:

"Thou must know that a burgess had as his wife a certain woman whom he greatly loved. That burgess let a lodging house which was near his dwelling to a woman of ill repute, and the wife of the burgess saw that many times there entered men of ill repute to this woman, the which thing led her likewise into the sin of lust. For a long time that lady lived and was a slave to lust, and it came to pass one day that her husband found her with a man in sin. Great was the wrath of the burgess at the sin of his wife, and the wife spake to her husband in these words: 'It came to pass that two wild goats were fighting in a meadow, and by reason of the violent blows which they gave the one to the other the blood flowed from them freely. The blood flowed down

upon the fair grass which was in the meadow wherein they fought. A fox saw that blood and licked it up; wherefore, when the goats next charged each other, they found the fox there, and wounded him in the side. So great was the wound which they gave the fox that he died thereof, and as he died he said that he was the occasion of his own death."

"Sir Leopard," said the dog, "great marvel is it that men who believe in God take not to heart how ill they do in permitting these women to sin in presence of the people who enter and leave this city.[1] It would seem that the lord of the city and the inhabitants thereof are themselves given to lust, and sin therewith as shamelessly as do dogs." As the dog spake these words, they entered the city and went to an inn. And after this the leopard and the ounce went to the king with the presents which they brought him. Many days were the messengers in that city, before they could speak with the king, for that king was accustomed to give audience only late and seldom, since he held himself very dear in significance of his nobility.[2]

One day it came to pass that the messen-

[1] On this abuse, see also *Blanquerna*, p. 283.
[2] See *Blanquerna*, pp. 289-90.

gers had been the whole day long at the entrance to the king's palace, and could not speak with him. So they were greatly angered with the king, and were incensed that they had perforce to remain in his court. Then a man who had been greatly wronged, and who likewise had been long in the same state, and had not gained audience of the king, spake, in the presence of the messengers, these words:

"Humble is God, who is the King of Heaven and of earth and of all that is, for whensoever a man desires to see Him and to speak with Him he may do so, and tell Him all his needs. But unlike this king for whom we wait, He has no porters to whom money must be given, neither has He councillors who work deception and wrong for the sake of gain. Nor does He give ear to flatterers, nor does He make veguers,[1] judges, bailies, or administrators who are proud, vainglorious, lustful, avaricious, and iniquitous. Blessed be that King, and blessed be all they that love Him and know Him and honour Him and serve Him."

Through the words which were spoken by that man the messengers took knowledge that this king was a man who worked evil,

[1] A judge with functions peculiar to Catalonia.

and the ounce spake to the leopard in these words:

"A certain king desired to give his daughter for wife to another king, and he sent a knight secretly to the country of that king, to ask of him the conditions wherein he lived. That knight did as he was commanded, and asked the peasants and all the people concerning the estate of the king, and one and all spake evil of him. Now one day it came to pass that that knight encountered two jesters who were coming from the court of the king, and he had given them much money and many garments. And to these jesters likewise the knight made question concerning the customs of the king, and they said that the king was bountiful, and a great hunter, and a lover of women; and in many other ways they praised the king, by the which praises, together with the evil report of the king among his people, the knight took knowledge that he was an evil man and one whose customs were vile. So the knight related to his lord that which he had heard concerning the king, and the king no longer desired to give his daughter to that king to wife, for he was afraid to give her to a man of such evil customs."

After these words the messengers were

given entrance to the king with but little more delay, and they presented to him the presents which their lord the lion had sent him, and gave him furthermore a letter from their lord, wherein were contained these words: "There was a king in a certain province who had many barons of great honour, who were very powerful. To the end that his barons might fear him, and that peace and justice might reign in his land, the king contrived to be in great friendship with the emperor. That emperor loved the king greatly, by reason of the favours which he did to him, and of the good customs which were his; and the barons, through their fear of the emperor, dared not to be disobedient to their lord in any thing soever that he commanded them; wherefore they were all submissive, and the king had peace in his land."

When the king had heard these things which the lion desired to say to him, and had taken the presents from the messengers, he gave the cat to a draper[1] who was near at hand, and the dog he gave to a knight who had great love of hunting. The messengers were greatly displeased because the king had given the cat to a draper, who was a person

[1] *I.e.*, a merchant or dealer in cloth.

of no honour, the more so because the lion had sent the cat to the king in significance of his own likeness.

When the messengers had returned to their lodging, after speaking at great length to the king concerning the mission upon the which they had come, the dog came to see them, and said that he was greatly displeased because the king had given him to that knight; for the knight purposed to use him in hunting the little people of the lion; wherefore his conscience smote him, because he would be forced to do that which was contrary to the king from whom he had come.

The king invited the messengers on a certain day to his palace, and on that day he made much rejoicing. In a hall of great beauty the king and the queen made a banquet, to the which they invited a great company of knights and ladies, and the messengers were invited thereto likewise. As they were all at table, there came jesters, who went up and down the hall singing and playing instruments of music, and the songs which they sang were dishonest, and sorted not with good breeding. These jesters praised that which should be blamed, and blamed those things that should be praised; and the king and the queen and all the rest

laughed loudly, and had great pleasure at that which those jesters did.

Now while the king and all the rest had great delight in the songs and the sayings of the jesters, a man poorly clothed, and having a long beard, entered the banqueting hall, and in the presence of the king and the queen and all the rest spake these words:

"Let not the king and the queen forget, nor their barons, nor any other men, either of great or small estate, who eat in this hall, that God has created all things that are on the table of the king, the which things He has created of divers kinds and of great delight to the taste, and He has caused them to come from distant lands, that they may be of service to man, and that man may serve God likewise. Let not the king or the queen believe that God sees not the dishonest and unruly conduct which is in this hall, whereby He is dishonoured. For there is no one here who reproves that which should be reproved, or who praises that which is to be praised, nor who gives thanks to God for the honour which He has worked in this world to the king and the queen and all the rest."

When the good man had spoken these words, there came a prudent squire, who

kneeled before the king and begged him to give him office in his court, that he might praise that which was to be praised, and blame that which should be blamed. The king would not consent to his desire, for he feared lest the squire should reprove him for those evil deeds which he was wont to commit, wherein he took delight, purposing to continue after the same manner until the end of his days, when he would make due penance for his sins.

Now while the squire was begging the king to give him this office, and the king refused to do so, the veguer of that city entered the presence of the king, leading a man who had murdered a knight in the city very wrongfully. So the king commanded that the murderer should be put to death, whereat he spake to the king in these words:

"My lord the king, it is the custom of God to pardon a man when he begs mercy of Him, and since thou dost hold the place of God upon the earth, I ask of thee pardon, and thou shouldst indeed grant my prayer, since God in such case pardons likewise."

Then the king answered, saying: "Just and merciful is God, and He indeed works justice when He pardons those who commit faults unwittingly, and when a man has

erred through accident or chance, and afterwards repents and asks pardon, then the mercy of God pardons him. But the justice of God would have no agreement with mercy, if mercy pardoned a man who purposed to commit sins, and then had hope that pardon would be granted him. And since thou didst purpose to slay this knight and then hadst hope that I should pardon thee, therefore art thou not worthy of pardon." Through the words which the king had spoken, the messengers took knowledge that he spake against the words which the squire had said to him, in that he had not consented to give him the office which he desired.

When the king and all the rest had eaten, and had left the banqueting hall, the messengers went to their lodging, and the one said to the other that the nobility of that court was very great, and that there were many noblemen therein and much treasure, but that the king was neither a prudent man nor had he fear of God.

When the messengers entered their hostelry, they found there the host, who was weeping sorely and making great lament.

"Sir Host," said the messengers, "where-

fore weepest thou, and what cause hast thou for sorrow ?"

"Sirs," answered the host, "the king has held a great parliament in this city and has summoned thereto many people who have come from distant lands. In this matter he has spent great sums of money, and to the end that he may meet his expenses he has levied a great tribute upon this city, which will bear hardly upon us all, and for my part I shall be forced to pay one thousand *solds*, the which it will be needful for me to borrow from the Jews."

"Sir Host," asked the messengers, "has the king then no treasure ?"

Then the host answered, saying that the king had no treasure, and that therefore he levied tributes upon his people; and whensoever he held a court, then levied he a tribute, the which courts he held twice in every year. After this manner he ruined his people, who were put to great expense for every court, and the levying of these sums of money impoverished the whole of the land.

"Fair friend," said the ounce, "what utility results from these courts which the king makes year by year ?"

The host made answer, saying that no

utility came thereof, but on the contrary great harm. For the people were impoverished thereby, and by reason of their poverty they committed many crimes and deceptions, and the king was held in displeasure by all his people; for so much did he spend and squander at his courts, that the money which he received could not suffice him, and he was accustomed to give to some and to take from others. Furthermore, when men believed that the king would have some project that was new to put forward, or some great enterprise to set on foot, he was wont to say naught at all, so they went from his presence on that account every one in great displeasure, and despised and spake evil of the king.

When the messengers had heard these words concerning the king, then spake they evil of him likewise, they and all their companions, the more so because the men of his own dominions spake evil of him.

And the leopard said to the host: "Great harm has come to this land, because it has not a ruler that is well accustomed, and that has justice and peace in his domains."

"Sir," said the host, "no man can reckon the harm which comes to a land when its prince works evil,—and this harm comes

both by reason of the evil which is done by the prince and by the good which he might do if he desired, but desires not. And in this wise an evil prince works harm after two manners, even as ye have heard. Now this king to whom ye have been sent is a man who trusts overmuch in his council, and his council is evil, and accursed, for the councillors are vile men every one; and each of them thinks himself to be better than the king himself, and between them they bring his kingdom to ruin, and the king cares naught for this, nor for aught, indeed, save hunting and taking pleasure, and living in lust, and working vanities."

On the next day the messengers returned to the palace of the king, and they could not enter the palace until they had given great largesse to the porters. When the messengers had come before the king, he showed greater honour to the leopard than to the ounce, making to him the friendlier gestures, and causing him to be seated the nearer to his person. At this the ounce had great envy, and was very wrathful against the king, for he thought that he should be shown as much honour as the leopard, or even more.

While the king was engaged with the messengers, there came into his presence

eight notables sent by four cities, making complaint of the men who held office from the king in these cities, the which officers were evil men and sinners, and brought the whole country to ruin. The notables begged the king that he would give their cities good officers in place of these; but the king sent them away to the council, saying that there their request would be considered. So the notables went before the council of the king, and repeated their requests, whereat the council reproved them straitly, for there were friends therein of the officers of those four cities, and it was with their counsel that they worked the evil which they did, and these men shared in the gains which the officers came by unjustly. So the eight notables returned to the cities whence they came, and could not obtain aid from the king as they had asked.

Thereupon the leopard said to the king: "My lord the king, what does thy Majesty desire that I should say to my Sovereign and Master?" And the king commanded the leopard to greet the king of beasts on his behalf, and to request him to send him, as soon as might be, a bear and a wolf, for he had a boar that was very strong, the which boar desired to do battle with the strongest bear

that he could find, and he had likewise a mastiff which he desired should do battle with the fiercest wolf that was in the court of the lion.

Then both the messengers took leave of the king, and went from his court in great displeasure, for they had been in that city for a very long time, and the king had given them naught, neither had he sent any presents to the king their master, but rather had signified to them that he desired their lord the lion to be subject to him.

Now upon the way, as the messengers were returning to their country, they met the eight notables, who were returning likewise, in great wrath and displeasure with the king and with all his council. As the messengers journeyed together with the notables, they spake of the words of the king, and of his council, and of the conduct of the one and of the other; and all of them spake evil of the king and of his council.

Then the leopard put this question to his companions: "Seems it to you, sirs, that the king is to blame for the harm which follows from his evil rule?" And one of the eight notables made answer in these words:

"There was a noble burgess who lived in a certain city and was very rich; and, when

he died, he left all that he had to his son. This son was in great demand of very many persons: some desired that he should take a wife, and others begged him that he should enter a religious order. But the youth was desirous to sell all that he had, and to build therewith a hospital and a bridge. The hospital he purposed to build that pilgrims might be lodged therein when they should pass through that town on their journeys to and from the Holy City; and the bridge he purposed to build, that pilgrims and other persons should pass over it, and should no longer be drowned in the river; for there was a river at the entrance to that city, and many pilgrims had been drowned there in their journeys to and from Jerusalem.[1] When the son of the burgess had builded the hospital and the bridge, he dreamed one night upon his bed that for all the good which would follow by reason of the hospital and the bridge he would have merit before God."

Through the words which the leopard heard, he took knowledge that the king would suffer punishment in Hell as great as was the harm which would follow at any and every time from the evil customs which his

[1] *Cf.* the measures for the safety of pilgrims and missionaries described in *Blanquerna*, chap. xcv.

wicked government brought upon the land; so he cried that none could reckon how great was the punishment that was prepared for the king and for his council. And he said further within himself that he had rather be a beaſt without reason, even though after his death he should live no more, than be a king of men who should have such guilt by reason of the evil which followed from his wicked government.

Then the messengers and the notables took leave of each other in friendly manner, and went their several ways. The leopard bade them have faith in God, who in a brief time would give them a good lord who should have good councillors and good officers of ſtate, and he bade them never to despair, since God suffers not that an evil prince shall have long life, for if he should live long then would he do very great evil.

Now you muſt know that as soon as the lion had sent his messengers and presents to the king of men, Dame Reynard, who had been appointed porter of the king, said to the king that the leopard had as a wife the fairesſt beaſt that was in all the world. So greatly did Dame Reynard praise the leopard before the king that the king became enamoured of her, and took her to wife, though both his

queen and his council had great displeasure thereat. But the council of the king feared Dame Reynard greatly, when they saw that she had brought it to pass that the king should commit so great a wrong against his queen and against the leopard, who was so loyal a servant to him.

"Fair friend," said the ox to Dame Reynard, "I have great fear that the leopard will slay thee, when he knows that thou hast brought it to pass that the king has corrupted his wife."

Dame Reynard answered in these words: "It came to pass in a certain land that a damsel committed a wrong against the queen whom she served, and this damsel had great intimacy with the king, by reason whereof the queen feared her, and because of her fear of the king she dared not take vengeance upon the damsel."

After this the messengers returned to the court of the lion their sovereign, and when they had spoken with him, and had recounted the result of their journey, the leopard returned to his home, where he thought to find his wife whom he so greatly loved. But the weasel and all the other members of the leopard's household were in great sorrow when they saw their lord, and they recounted

to the leopard the dishonour which the king had done him in corrupting his wife. Great was the wrath of the leopard against the king, and he enquired of the weasel if his wife were wrathful with the king or pleased thereat when he took her into his household.

"My lord," said the weasel, "thy lady was greatly wroth at the wooing of her by the king, and she wept sorely, and lamented at parting from thee, for she loved thee above all things else."

Then the leopard's wrath grew hot, because his wife had been forced to enter the household of the king; and he said that if she had been pleased thereat his displeasure would have been less great. So while the leopard was thus wrathful, he considered how he might avenge himself upon the lion who had worked such great treason upon him.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE BATTLE BETWEEN THE LEOPARD AND THE OUNCE

To the court of the king came the leopard, and Dame Reynard, who saw him approach, spake thus to the king in secret: "My lord the king, by reason of thy passion for the leopard's wife, the leopard is very wrathful with me. If in his presence thou show me not great honour, and make me not to be nearer thy person than any other, I believe that the leopard will slay me." So the lion made Dame Reynard to be among his councillors forthwith, and caused her to be nearest of any to his person, to the end that the leopard might not dare to wound or slay her; and by the counsel of Dame Reynard the peacock was made porter of the king, because his sense of smell is very strong.

The council of the king, and all the barons who were in his court, had great displeasure at the honour which the king did to Dame Reynard, and most of all was the leopard displeased thereat, for they had told him one and all that Dame Reynard had been the

occasion of the adultery of his wife with the king. Now the leopard was in the presence of the king, and with him were many other barons of great honour. And in the presence of all the leopard denounced the king for his treason, saying that he had been false to him in carrying off his wife; and if in the royal court there were any baron who would make excuse for the treason of the king, he would do battle with him, and cause him to confess that the king was a traitor. Speaking thus, the leopard issued his challenge and gave his gage to the king.

When the leopard had denounced the king for treason before all his court, the king was very wrathful, and had great shame before his people that he had been called a traitor. So he said to his barons: "Which of you will do battle with the leopard, who accuses me of treason?"

All the barons were silent, until Dame Reynard spake these words: "Treason is a thing very displeasing to God, and great dishonour comes to a nation when its king, their lord, is accused thereof. And since the leopard does this great dishonour to his sovereign, and is willing to place himself in peril of death for the sake of this dishonour, great honour will come to any baron who

defends the king from this charge; and if any, to defend the king's honour, will do battle, he will receive from the king a great reward."

By reason of the dishonour which was cast upon the king when the leopard accused him of treason, and for the envy which the ounce had of the leopard, because he had received the greater honour from the king of men, for these reasons the ounce accepted the challenge of the leopard, and defended the king from the treason imputed to him. Yet the ounce had knowledge that the king had indeed worked deception and wrong to the leopard, who had served him loyally all the days of his life.

So the leopard and the ounce went to the field of battle, and all the people said: "Now at last it will appear which is the conqueror, whether truth or falsehood."

The cock enquired of the serpent which of the two she thought would gain the victory, and the serpent spake these words in reply: "Trial by combat was ordained to the end that falsehood might be confounded and destroyed by truth, and God Himself is truth, wherefore any person who maintains that which is false does battle with God and with truth."

These words which the serpent spake secretly to the cock were heard by the leopard and the ounce, and the leopard was greatly comforted thereby; but the ounce had remorse and sadness, and feared leſt the king might be the occasion of his death and his dishonour. All that day until the hour of compline continued the battle between the leopard and the ounce, and the ounce defended himself with great vehemence againſt the leopard, and would have conquered him and slain him, had not conscience weakened his ſtrength; and as for the leopard, the truth which was on his side, and the wrathful indignation which he had againſt the king, gave him ſtrength and vigour when he had thought that his forces would have failed him. So ſtrong was the leopard, by the faith which he had in the righteousness of his cause, that it seemed not that anything could vanquish him. And in the end he gained the victory over the ounce, and compelled him to acknowledge before all the court that the king their lord was a false traitor.

Great was the confusion and the shame of the king by reason of that battle, and when the leopard had slain the ounce all the people were ashamed at the dishonour which was done to their lord. So great were the

confusion and shame of the king before his people, and so wrathful was he with the leopard, who had caused him to come to such dishonour, that he could not restrain his wrath, and in the presence of all made as though he would slay the leopard, who could not defend himself from his sovereign because he was wearied with the fight.

So the leopard was slain by the king and died, and all who were assembled in that place had great displeasure at the crime which the king had committed, and each and all desired that another king should rule over them, because it is a thing most perilous for a nation to be in subjection to a king who is a traitor, and works great harm, and yields to his baser passions.

All that night the king had great wrath and displeasure, and on the morning following he called together his council, and asked their advice upon the message which had been sent to him by the king of men, namely, that he should send him a wolf and a bear.

"Sire," said the serpent, who was the king's most prudent councillor, "in thy land are many bears and many wolves. From these thou mayest choose at thy pleasure a wolf and a bear whom it will be fitting to thy majesty to send."

But on the other hand spake Dame Reynard, and said: "The king of men is the noblest and most powerful king in all the world; wherefore, my lord, it is needful for thee to send the most prudent and most powerful bear and wolf that thou hast, and if thou doest not this thou wilt have great blame and peril."

Then the king enquired of Dame Reynard who were the wisest and strongest bear and wolf in his kingdom, and Dame Reynard answered and said: "The bear and the wolf that are in thy council, since, being thy councillors, they are of necessity more prudent and more powerful than any other bear or wolf in thy kingdom."

The king thought it very good to send to the king of men the bear and the wolf that were in his council; nor did these beasts desire to make excuse for themselves, since they loved to be held in honour, and they feared that, if they excused themselves, they would be held for cowards. Whereupon Dame Reynard said to the king that, as he was sending to the king of men the noblest persons in the whole of his domains, it was right that he should send them with the wisest messenger in his court, who should present them to the king of men. This

counsel likewise the king thought to be good, and he said to the serpent that she should be the messenger.

Before the serpent left the court of the king to carry out the king's commands, she spake these words: "It came to pass that a fox once found in a fair meadow a piece of meat in the which was a hook which a hunter had put there, that he might take the fox by means thereof if she attempted to eat the meat that was there. When the fox saw the meat, she had no wish to touch it, and spake these words: 'That meat has not been placed in this meadow without occasion to give trouble and danger.'"

The lion, ever since he had committed the crime of slaying the leopard, had not the subtlety or the guile which he was wont to have, and he understood not the words which the serpent had spoken. So he commanded the serpent to expound these words, for he understood not the meaning thereof. Then the serpent said that since Dame Reynard and the ox had been admitted to his court it had never been without anxiety and tribulation; wherefore the honour which the lion had done to Dame Reynard and the ox was not without occasion of trouble and anxiety to the king and his court.

When the ox heard that the serpent had thus made accusation of him to the king, he made excuses for himself to the king in presence of his court, and said that he had no evil intention whatsoever toward him, nor had he any mind soever to commit aught that should harm the king or his court; for the king had honoured him, the more so because he was one of the beasts which the king was accustomed to eat, and the king desired not to eat him; wherefore he ought to give to the king all the honour that was his due. Furthermore, he excused himself before the king, saying that Dame Reynard had counselled him to cry aloud thrice by night and thrice by day, and to enter the court that he might work much good with the king.

In such manner did he excuse himself before the king that Dame Reynard had displeasure thereat, and conceived in her heart much evil will against the ox. It came to pass one day that it had snowed very heavily, and the cold was great, and neither the lion nor any of his court had the wherewithal to eat, and they were very hungry. So the lion asked Dame Reynard what they might eat, and Dame Reynard answered that she knew not, but that she would go to

the peacock and ask him if he knew of any beast that was near that place who might be eaten by the king and his companions.

The peacock had great affright when he saw Dame Reynard coming, for he feared her greatly. But Dame Reynard said to the peacock that if the king asked him if he knew of any beast that could be eaten, he should make answer that he could discover no such beast by his sense of smell, but that one thing he knew, namely, that the breath of the ox gave great offence, and that the ox in a very brief space would assuredly die of some disease. The peacock, who feared Dame Reynard greatly, and whose grain the ox was wont to eat, was consenting to the death of the ox, and said to the lion that which Dame Reynard had repeated to him.

When the lion had enquired of the peacock what he might eat, and this answer had been given, that he knew not, but that the ox would assuredly die in a brief space of time, as was signified by the foulness of his breath, the lion desired exceedingly to slay and eat the ox. But his conscience pricked him, since he had promised fidelity to the ox, who had served him for a long time and trusted him wholly.

When Dame Reynard saw the hesitation

of the king, she drew near to him, and enquired of him why he slew not the ox, since in a short time he would assuredly die of some disease, as the peacock had said; and Dame Reynard added further that it was the will of God for the king to satisfy his needs by means of his subjects whensoever it was fitting. The lion answered Dame Reynard, and said that for naught in the world would he break faith with the ox after his promise to him.

"Sire," answered Dame Reynard, "wilt thou eat the ox if at my request he himself releases thee from the bond of faith by the which thou hast bound thyself?" The lion answered that he would do so. Then Dame Reynard went to a crow, who likewise was very hungry, and spake to him these words:

"The lion has great hunger, and I will bring it to pass that he shall slay the ox, who is very fat, and will suffice for the food of us all, for he is a great beast indeed. Wherefore, if the lion declares before thee that his hunger is great, offer thou thyself to him, and beg him to slay and eat thee. And this he will not do, for I will make excuse for thee before him, and he will not depart from my counsel, for all that I counsel him he does. And if I offer myself to the king likewise for

food, say thou that I am not good to eat, and that my flesh is not healthy."

When Dame Reynard had thus instructed the crow, she went to the ox likewise, and said that the king desired to eat him, because the peacock had said that he knew by his breath that in a brief space of time he would die of some disease. Great was the fear of the ox, and he answered: "How true was the word which a farmer said to a knight!"

"And what word was that?" enquired Dame Reynard.

The ox answered her in the manner following: "A rich farmer desired honour, and he gave his daughter as wife to a knight who loved his riches; and the nobility of the knight attracted to itself the riches, and the riches could not have such great power in the farmer as to bring to him nobility. But the nobility of the knight attracted to itself the riches of the farmer, in such manner that the farmer became poor and yet had no nobility, while the knight had still his nobility and likewise the riches of the farmer. Whereupon the farmer said to the knight that in the relationship of a knight and a farmer is there poverty and pain for the farmer, and for the knight, honour."

"Even so," said the ox, "in the relationship between an ox and a lion is there death for the ox and satiety for the lion."

Dame Reynard exhorted the ox to have no fear, since the lion had promised fidelity to him and would work no treason upon him; and she counselled the ox to offer himself to the lion for food, if need were; whereupon the lion would thank him heartily, and by reason of his gratitude for the offer, and of the relationship wherein he was with him, he would do him no harm. "Furthermore," said she, "I will myself aid thee in such wise that the lion shall do thee no villainy or wrong."

When Dame Reynard had ordered all these things, she came before the lion with the ox and the crow; and the crow presented himself to the lion, saying that he knew how great was the hunger of his sovereign, and offering himself for food. Dame Reynard answered and made excuse for the crow, saying that the crow had not flesh which was good for a king to eat. After these words Dame Reynard offered herself to the king for food, since she had no other thing that she could give him to eat, save herself alone; but the crow said to the lion that the flesh of a fox was unhealthy in the extreme. Then

in like words the ox offered himself to the lion, counselling him to take him and eat him, since he was large and fat and his flesh was good to eat. This the lion did, and slew the ox, so that the king, Dame Reynard and the crow ate of the flesh of the ox as much as they would.

When the ox was dead, the lion enquired of the cock and of Dame Reynard who should now be his chamberlain; and the cock had a mind to speak first, but Dame Reynard looked at him wrathfully, so that he was afraid to speak until Dame Reynard had first spoken. So Dame Reynard spake to the king, saying that the rabbit had a fair countenance, and was a humble beast, and would be meet for the office wherein the cat and the ox had been aforetime. The lion enquired of the cock if that which Dame Reynard had said seemed good to him, and the cock dared make no reply, so great was his fear of Dame Reynard; so he counselled the king even as Dame Reynard had done. Then the lion made the rabbit his chamberlain, whereupon Dame Reynard had great power in the court, for the cock and the peacock and the rabbit feared her equally, and the lion believed all that she said to him.

One day it came to pass that the king had

cause to treat concerning an event of great importance which had happened in his kingdom, so he took counsel with the cock and with Dame Reynard. The cock said to the king that he alone sufficed not to counsel him in such great matters without others to aid him; so he begged the king to increase the number of his council, for it is no honour to a king that his council should grow small, and the council had indeed grown small, since the serpent and the leopard and the ounce and the wolf had left it. The king thought it good to make more councillors, and he would have appointed them straightway, had not Dame Reynard spoken these words:

"There once lived a man in a certain country to whom God had given so much knowledge that he understood the language of the beasts and the birds. But God had given him that knowledge upon the condition that he should repeat to none the things which he heard and understood of those which were spoken by the beasts and by the birds, and that on the day when he should repeat anything thereof he should die.

"Now that man had a garden, in the which an ox drew water from a well, and an ass brought the dung that was needful for

the use of that garden. It came to pass one evening that the ox was greatly fatigued, and the ass counselled him that he should not eat his oats that night, to the end that on the morrow he should not be led to the well, and that thus he might have rest. The ox agreed with the counsel of the ass, and ate none of his oats that evening. So the gardener thought that the ox was ill, and led the ass to the well in his place. All that day the ass worked at the well with great labour. When night fell he went to the stable, and finding there the ox who was lying down and resting at his ease, the ass wept before him and spake these words: 'Our master has decided to sell thee to a butcher, for he thinks thee to be ill; wherefore it is good that thou return to thine office, lest he kill thee, and that thou give no more the semblance of being ill.' These words spake the ass to the ox, lest he himself should be forced to labour again at the well, which thing troubled him more sorely than the carrying of the dung. The ox feared to die, and ate his oats that night, and made as if he were recovered.

"Now that man who was master of the ox and of the ass heard that which they had said, and in the presence of his wife laughed within himself at that which they had said. Then

his wife enquired of her husband whereat he was laughing, and he would not tell her, for he feared lest he should die, since it had been told him that he would die if he repeated aught that he heard of the language of the beasts or of the birds. But the woman begged her husband earnestly and long that he would tell her that whereat he laughed, and still he would not. So she said that she would neither eat nor drink again, but would die of her sorrow, if her husband told her not. And all that day and night the woman remained obdurate, and neither ate nor drank. So the husband, who loved her greatly, said that he would tell her, but first he made his will; and after this he was about to tell her the reason of his laughing, but he heard that which the house-dog said to the cock, and the reply of the cock thereto."

"And what was that?" said the lion to Dame Reynard.

So Dame Reynard related to the lion that while the man was making his testament, the cock crew, and the dog reproved the cock for crowing, since his master was about to die. Great marvel had the cock at the reproof of the dog, whereupon the dog related to him how that his lord was about to die and desired to die that his wife might

live. The cock answered and said that it was well that his master should die, for he was an evil man, and unfit to be the lord over his wife. Then the cock called to his ten wives, and brought them all together in one place, and did with them whatsoever he willed; and this the cock did to signify that the dog should be consoled for the death of his master. And they both had consolation, and the cock crew, and the dog was glad.

"'Friend,' said the dog to the cock, 'if thou hadst a wife so foolish as is the wife of my master, what wouldst thou do, if it came to pass that she brought thee into peril of death even as my master has been brought?' Then the cock said that if he were in the place of his master, he would cut from a pomegranate tree which was in the garden five stout rods, and that he would beat his wife until he had broken the rods or caused his wife to eat and drink, or that he would allow her to die of hunger and of thirst. So the man, who had heard these words which were spoken by the cock and the dog, rose from his bed, and did that which the cock had counselled him; and his wife, when she had been well beaten, ate and drank, and did that which her husband desired."

When Dame Reynard had related to the

king the example aforementioned, she said that the cock was very wise, and well able to counsel him in all things, wherefore the king ought not to increase the number of his councillors. The more so, she said, because in a multitude of councillors there are too many variations and diversities of intention and opinion and will, by the which variety the council of a prince is ofttimes greatly troubled.

When Dame Reynard had spoken, the cock said these words: "A parrot and a crow were sitting in a tree, and at the foot of the tree there was a monkey who had placed wood upon a glow-worm, thinking that it was a fire, and he blew upon the wood with intent to make a fire whereby he might warm himself. The parrot cried to the monkey and told him that it was not a fire but a glow-worm; and the crow said to the parrot that he should not instruct or correct any who would not receive counsel or correction. But the parrot repeated many times that it was a glow-worm and no fire; and the crow reproved the parrot as many times again, for desiring to make straight that which is by nature crooked. At last the parrot came down from the tree and approached the monkey, that he might the better make him to understand the thing for which he reproved

him; and he came so near to the monkey that the monkey, seeing him, slew him."[1]

When the cock had related this example, the king believed that he made reference to his royal presence, wherefore he made a threatening geſture before the cock, in significance of his anger. Whereupon Dame Reynard took the cock and killed him and ate him before the king.

When Dame Reynard was left sole councillor of the king, and the rabbit was the king's chamberlain, and the peacock his porter, then was Dame Reynard greatly rejoiced, and did with the king that which she willed.

While Dame Reynard was thus in great joy, she had remembrance of the treason which she had conceived againſt the king at the time when she told the elephant that she would bring it to pass that the lion should die and that he should reign in his ſtead. Gladly would Dame Reynard have remained in the eſtate wherein she was, but she had fear that the elephant might betray her; wherefore she resolved to bring to pass the death of the king, that she might fulfil the promise which she had made.

[1] For a slightly different version of this fable, see *Blanquerna*, p. 198.

CHAPTER VII

OF THE DEATH OF DAME REYNARD

Soon Dame Reynard forgat the honour which the king had done to her, setting her above all the barons of his court, and she thought only of how she might encompass his death. So one day she said to the elephant that it was time for the king to die, the more so since all was prepared, and in all the court there was none other councillor than herself.

For a great space of time the elephant considered that which Dame Reynard had said, and his conscience smote him for consenting to the death of the king. But, on the other hand, he feared that if he were disobedient to Dame Reynard she would betray him and bring about his death. In the end he agreed within himself that he would not be consenting to the treason, and become an accomplice in the death of his sovereign. Furthermore, he feared that if he became king Dame Reynard would betray him likewise, even as she had betrayed the king; and he preferred to be in peril of death

than to commit treason against his natural lord.

While the elephant considered thus, he said to himself that even as Dame Reynard desired to slay the king by subtlety, even so would he himself with like subtlety cause the king to slay Dame Reynard; for if in her small body was concealed so much treason and subtlety and skill, how much more in his own body might there be loyalty and prudence, with a skill that was no less than hers.

As he still considered, Dame Reynard came and said to him: "My Lord Elephant, whereon thinkest thou, and why considerest thou not how thou mayest become king, ere the serpent return from the mission whereon she has been sent, for she is very prudent and skilful?" This question caused the elephant to consider if he ought not to await the serpent before plotting anything against Dame Reynard, and he resolved that the serpent should bring it to pass how the king should slay Dame Reynard.

When Dame Reynard saw that the elephant was negligent concerning his business, she feared the return of the serpent, and likewise her own discovery by the elephant, and she

said to the elephant that he ought to look to the business, for, if he undertook it, it would come to perfection sooner than he thought. Great fear had the elephant at the skill of Dame Reynard, and he asked her in what relationship he would be with her if he were king. Dame Reynard answered that he would be in the same relationship as was the king, that is to say, that she alone would be his councillor, and that the rabbit would be his chamberlain and the peacock his porter.

When Dame Reynard had said this, the elephant enquired of her in what manner she would bring about the death of the king, and Dame Reynard answered him, and described the manner wherein she purposed to encompass it, in these words:

"Between the boar and the lion I shall put discord and evil will, for the boar believes himself to be the equal of the king in person and in strength. So I shall tell the boar to take heed concerning the king, who desires to slay him; and after that I shall tell the king to take heed of the boar, who desires to be king in his stead, and I shall cause the king to slay the boar. When the boar is dead, and the king will be wearied with the struggle which he will have had with the boar,

then, My Lord Elephant, canſt thou slay him with ease, and canſt be king in his ſtead."

Then the elephant purposed to deceive Dame Reynard, even in the manner wherein she had purposed to deceive the king, and he spake to her in these words: "Promises without witnesses are vain. Wherefore I think it good that we have witnesses of the promise which thou desireſt me to make thee,—namely, that thou shalt be my councillor alone, and the rabbit shall be my chamberlain, and the peacock my porter. For without witnesses to this promise I might afterwards break it, and thou wouldſt have no proof thereof; and perchance if I were king I should feel less obligation to honour thee than that which now I feel, being not king, and thou being the king's councillor."

Dame Reynard considered the words of the elephant for a great space of time, and she feared leſt the witnesses should reveal the treason. When the elephant saw that Dame Reynard was thus thoughtful, he said to her that the beſt witnesses whom they could have were the rabbit and the peacock, for these feared Dame Reynard and would have pleasure in being his officers; and, with

all this, they need not fear that these would reveal any secret thing soever.

This counsel Dame Reynard thought very good, and in presence of the rabbit and the peacock the promises were solemnly made; and furthermore the rabbit and the peacock promised the elephant and Dame Reynard that they would keep it secret. After these words, the elephant counselled Dame Reynard to tell the boar first of all that the king desired to slay him, and to tell the king afterwards. So Dame Reynard went to speak with the boar, whereupon, while she was thus engaged, he spake himself with the king, telling him all that he had undertaken together with her, and asking pardon of the king for the treason which he had conceived against him, declaring his repentance for it, and his desire to be a loyal subject rather than a traitorous king.

"How, then," enquired the king, "may I be sure, Sir Elephant, that that which thou sayest is true?" The elephant answered that he might know it by this thing, that Dame Reynard had caused it to come to pass that there was no other beast than herself in his council; and that in his household were only the rabbit, who feared her by nature, and the peacock likewise. "Further-

more, Sire," said the elephant, "I will give thee another certain proof: Dame Reynard has even now gone to the boar, to tell him that thou desirest to slay him, and to thee she will say likewise that the boar desires to slay thee, and will counsel thee to make threatening gestures before him that he may believe her words to be true." The elephant told the king also that the rabbit and the peacock had consented to his death.

Great marvel had the king concerning Dame Reynard, whom he had so greatly honoured, that she could conceive deception or sin against him, and he spake these words: "I remember that I once heard my father relate how my grandsire, who was king over a vast country, desired to humiliate the barons to whom great honour was due, and to exalt the viler beasts, to whom no honour was befitting; among the which beasts was the monkey, to whom he did great honour. And that monkey, because he was like to man in his appearance, desired himself to be king, and in place of honour he conceived treason against my grandsire."

"Sire," said the elephant, "little wine can be contained in a small flagon, neither can there be great honour or loyalty in a person whose origin is vile; wherefore it is

well that thou slay Dame Reynard and have a council that is good, and be free once more in thine own domains, and cause no longer the nobility which God has given thee to be subjected to a person that is evil."

After these words, the elephant went to the boar, with whom Dame Reynard had spoken, and, saying that he knew all that she had said to him, related it to him every whit. Then the boar marvelled at the knowledge of the elephant, who related to him further the whole story.

While they spake thus together, Dame Reynard went to the lion, and told him that the boar desired to slay him; whereat the lion had knowledge immediately of Dame Reynard's treason. So he assembled a great company of his barons, among them the elephant and the boar and Dame Reynard and the rabbit and the peacock. Then, in presence of them all, the king bade the rabbit and the peacock tell him the truth concerning the testimony which they had borne Dame Reynard, and concerning their agreement to his death. Great was the fear of the rabbit and the peacock at this command, and greater yet was the fear of Dame Reynard, who spake to the king in these words:

"My lord the king, that which I said to the elephant I said that I might prove thy barons, to see if they were good and loyal, and that which I said to the boar I said for the same reason. And as to the rabbit and the peacock, I certify thee that to them I said none of that which the elephant alleges against me."

Thus Dame Reynard trusted that, for fear, neither the rabbit nor the peacock would dare to accuse her to the king, nor reveal to him anything whatsoever.

But when Dame Reynard had made an end of speaking, the king looked at the rabbit and the peacock after a manner that was most terrible, and uttered a great roar, to the end that in the consciences of the rabbit and the peacock the nature of his high office might have greater virtue than the fear which they had of Dame Reynard. And when the lion had uttered a great roar, he commanded the rabbit and the peacock, with great wrath, to tell him the truth; and they could no longer restrain themselves, but told him all the truth. Then the king, with his own hand, slew Dame Reynard, after the which thing his court returned to its former good estate, and the king made the elephant and the bear and other honoured barons to be

of his council, and cast out therefrom the rabbit and the peacock.

Ended is The Book of the Beasts, *which Felix presented to a king, that in reading it he might learn from the things that are done by the beasts the manner wherein a king should reign, keeping himself from evil counsel and from traitors.*

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